



## SOMEBODY HERE NEEDS YOU.

TO: Sen. Joe Hune, Chair, Agriculture Committee, and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee

FROM: Ann M. Griffin, Esq., Special Projects Manager, Michigan Humane Society

RE: Public Testimony on SB 403

DATE: May 24, 2016

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### **The Michigan Humane Society is testifying in support of SB 403.**

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) thanks Sen. Marty Knollenberg for introducing SB 403. MHS also thanks Sen. Hune and the Agriculture Committee for taking testimony regarding SB 403 and for allowing MHS to share the following information in support of its position.

MHS is the largest and oldest animal welfare organization in the state with more than 200,000 constituents and supporters. MHS works to end companion animal homelessness, provide the highest quality service and compassion to the animals entrusted to our care, and to be a leader in promoting humane values. MHS is a private, nonprofit organization and is not affiliated with any national humane organizations nor any local or regional humane societies or SPCAs.

### **Michigan legislation permanently banning the use of gas chambers for euthanasia is necessary.**

While the gas chambers that were in use in Michigan in recent months have reportedly been taken off line, there is still a need for statewide legislation requiring that humane euthanasia be performed only by injection. Such a statute would reflect the strong public sentiment against the use of gas chambers to euthanize shelter animals, as it was a response to public pressure that caused the remaining gas chambers to be taken out of service over the last several months. Also, a state statute requiring euthanasia by injection ensures that the gas chamber euthanasia practice will never be reinstituted.

### **Requiring euthanasia by injection (EBI) is in both humans' and animals' best interests.**

EBI poses significantly less risk to shelter workers' physical and mental health than gas chamber euthanasia. EBI is considered the most humane method of euthanasia for an animal.

### **Human benefits**

Gas chambers are dangerous and pose serious physical and mental health risks to the shelter workers who are required to use them to euthanize animals.

Physical injury can be caused by the toxic gas used to euthanize animals, which is also harmful and potentially fatal to humans. A 39-year-old shelter worker in Chattanooga, Tennessee failed to properly vent a chamber before opening it and died from exposure to CO gas.<sup>1</sup> Gas chambers have also been known to explode, injuring nearby workers.

In 2009, gas build-up caused the door of the Lincoln County, North Carolina shelter to explode open; the incident put an animal control officer in the emergency room. In 2008, an explosion in the Iredell County, North Carolina Animal Services' gas chamber revealed that, contrary to recommendations, the equipment in the vicinity of the chamber was not explosion proof. A shelter worker was in the room at the time and other personnel were nearby.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the potential for physical harm, shelter workers experience increased levels of emotional stress and compassion fatigue when performing gas chamber euthanasia.<sup>3</sup> The American Humane Association observed that gas chamber euthanasia prevents shelter workers from providing any physical comfort to animals undergoing euthanasia, which can be demoralizing.<sup>4</sup>

### **Animal benefits**

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines on euthanasia, "Intravenous injection of a barbituric acid derivative is the preferred method for euthanasia of dogs, cats, other small animals, and horses."<sup>5</sup>

EBI is a faster and less painful form of euthanasia than gas chamber euthanasia. EBI is also a more reliable form of euthanasia, as some animals have been known to survive attempts at gas chamber euthanasia.<sup>6</sup> EBI is used by veterinary clinics and animal protection shelters. The euthanasia training provided in Michigan and approved by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development focuses exclusively on EBI. No training is available on the use of gas chambers for euthanasia.

### **Cost benefits**

A cost study commissioned by the American Humane Association revealed that the cost of EBI per animal was \$2.29, which was cheaper than any approach to using a gas chamber for euthanasia. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Humane Society Worker Accidentally Gassed to Death*, thechattanooga.com (March 31, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> *American Humane Association Humane Euthanasia of Shelter Animals Fact Sheet* (available on line at <http://www.americanhumane.org/assets/pdfs/animals/adv-ebi-factsheetpdf.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> S.B. 3564 (S-1): Analysis as Reported from Committee (Mich. 2013) (S.B. 354 was the euthanasia by injection bill introduced in the 2013-2014 legislative session).

<sup>4</sup> *Supra* n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition* at 29 (available on line at <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf>).

<sup>6</sup> *Miracle Dog Survives Gas Chamber, Comes to NJ for Adoption*, NBCNewYork.com (available on line at <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Dog-Survives-Gas-Chamber-New-Jersey-Adoption-Daniel-the-Beagle-132742588.html>).

cost of using the gas chamber for euthanasia ranged from \$2.77 to \$4.98 per animal, depending on the number of operators and whether the animal required a tranquilizer.<sup>7</sup>

**MHS respectfully requests that the Senate Agriculture Committee vote in favor of SB 403, which would enable Michigan to join the ranks of states that have protected human and animal health and wellbeing by requiring euthanasia by injection.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

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<sup>7</sup> EBI Cost Analysis Matrix (available on line at <http://www.americanhumane.org/assets/pdfs/animals/adv-co-ebi-cost-analysis09.pdf>).